



COUNCILMEMBER  
**REX**  
RICHARDSON

**R-33**

**Date:** August 13, 2019

**To:** Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and Members of the City Council

**From:** Councilmember Rex Richardson, Ninth District *RR*  
Vice Mayor Dee Andrews, Sixth District *DA*  
Councilmember Roberto Uranga, Seventh District *(R)*

**Subject:** Strategies to Improve Diversity in the Fire Department

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Respectfully request to receive and file the 2019 Long Beach Fire Department Recruitment Report; and

Request the City Manager to identify the resources to establish a full-time, sworn Diversity Recruitment and Partnerships Manager position in the Fire Department to complete the strategic diversity recruitment plan and report back to City Council with the recommendations for sustainability in August 2020.

**Discussion**

The City of Long Beach is well-known and celebrated for its diversity. As home to the largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia, and a fast growing Latinx community, 72% of the nearly half a million people that reside in Long Beach are people of color, and more than half are women.

*Context*

Acknowledging Long Beach's diversity is extremely important when looking at the personnel demographics of our public safety services, such as the Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD). As the first responders to our communities, diversity within the sector is essential to enhancing cultural competency and improving community trust.

According to the City of Long Beach's 2018 Workforce Demographics Report, the Fire Department faces the greatest recruitment challenges to achieve ethnic and gender diversity. Data from the report shows that the Fire Department is comprised of 40% people of color and just 10% women, which is a significant underrepresentation of the City's diversity.

The 2019 Long Beach Fire Department Recruitment Report examines the Department's recruitment and selection processes and explores best practices



employed by other agencies to recruit more diverse applicants. The data analysis shows a decrease in the number of Black applicants, between 2014 and 2019, by half and notes that female and black applicants score lower on the standardized tests for the Fire Service. Conversely, the number of Hispanic applicants has increased between 2014-2019, now at a rate comparable to White applicants at nearly 40%, while the number of Latinx employees within the Department was at less than a quarter.

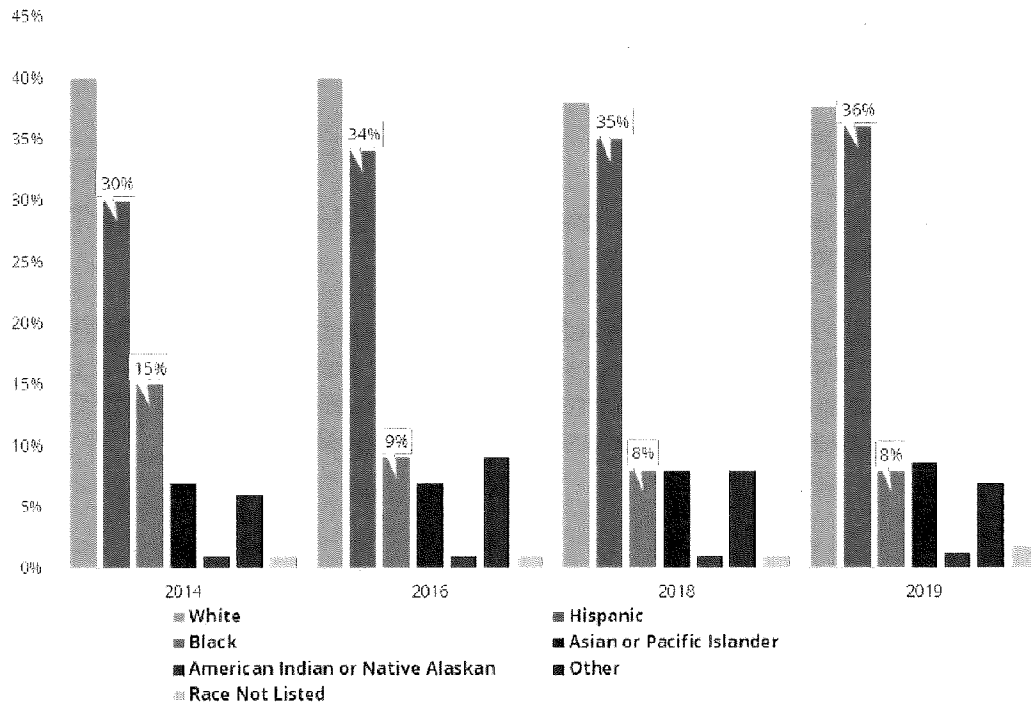
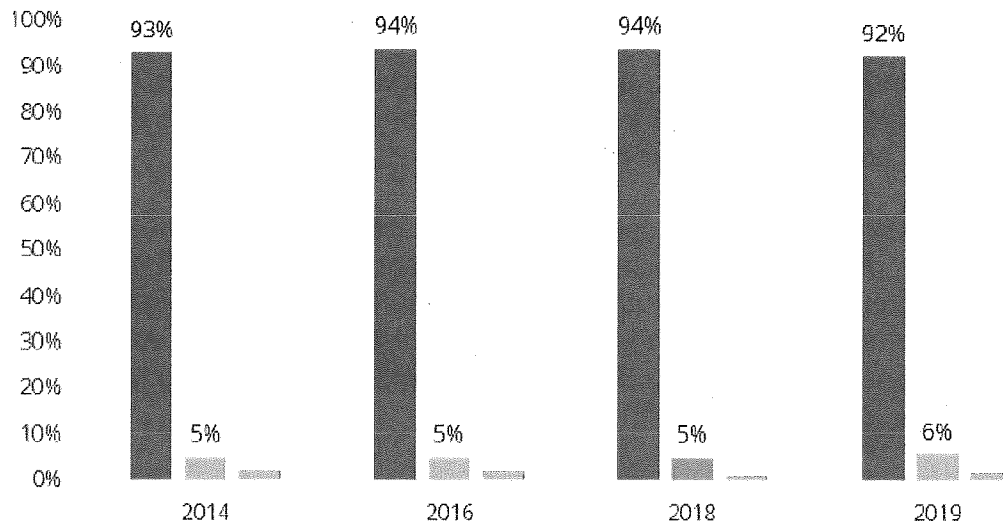


Figure 1: 2014-2019 LBFD Recruit Applicants by Race/Ethnicity



*Figure 2: 2014-2019 LBFD Recruit Applicants by Gender*

While lack of diversity in the fire service is not exclusive to the City of Long Beach, agencies across the country have taken strides to improve the recruitment and retention of women, people of color, and LGBTQ-identifying individuals by allocating resources to support these efforts.

### *The Opportunity*

The 2019 Long Beach Fire Department Recruitment Report outlines five strategic categories that will guide the development of a comprehensive recruitment plan. Each category provides a few strategies to support the broader objective: from re-examining the selection process, to needing dedicated staff to develop, facilitate, and monitor the LBFD's diversity recruitment programs and initiatives.

The Fire Department does not currently have staff assigned to recruitment; therefore, as the City of Long Beach enters a new budgetary cycle, piloting a full-time, sworn position for a Diversity Recruitment and Partnerships Manager within the Fire Department offers the needed capacity to develop a comprehensive recruitment and retainment strategy.

Just as listed in the LBFD Recruitment Report, this strategic plan should include, but not be limited to the following:

- An outreach and marketing strategy,
- Partnerships with local educational institutions,
- Retention programs, and
- Staff trainings.



The outreach and marketing strategy should consist of neighborhood-specific outreach programs, coordination of pop-up events across the City, with an emphasis on low-income and diverse neighborhoods. Staff should also consider targeted social and multimedia campaigns to best engage Long Beach's diverse populations around jobs in the Fire service.

Strategic partnerships with local educational institutions present the opportunity to coalesce on programs and initiatives, most importantly, introducing pathways to a career in public safety to audiences at every educational level. Programs to consider include: Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) Career Pathway in Fire, Dual Enrollment at Long Beach City College & LBUSD; field trips that occur in elementary, middle, and high school.

Staff should also consider facilitating test preparation courses, high school-level internships, and the coordination of a high school senior vocational training program that prepares Long Beach youth for a pre-apprenticeship upon graduating.

Lastly, retention programs, such as mentoring for women and minority recruits, and staff trainings related to sexual harassment, implicit bias, and cultural competency will help to foster an inclusive work environment. The Fire Department's leadership to examine and identify actionable steps to reflect the diversity of the City's populous is commendable and should be supported in the upcoming fiscal year.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Due to the urgency and time sensitivity of this item, no Financial Management review was able to be conducted.